

Playing in The Garden: Sound, Performance, and Images of Persecution¹

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That until fairly recently, film theory has been dismissive of the contribution of the soundtrack in generating the film's fiction has become a commonplace in film musicology. In the past, film theory defiantly maintained a camera-oriented visual bias, theorizing the soundtrack only as a redundant adjunct that functions in service to the image but adds nothing to it. It was not only film musicology that began to question this prioritization of image over sound: in the 1980s, a number of articles were written that questioned film theory's view from the perspective of film sound—these included “Moving Lips: The Cinema as Ventriloquist” by Rick Altman (1980).² In fact, in a deconstructive maneuver, Altman reverses the prioritization of image over sound completely, theorizing the soundtrack as a ventriloquist and the image as its dummy: thus, by moving the lips of the imagetrack, the soundtrack creates the illusion that the image produces the film's sound in order to conceal the fact of the soundtrack's absence from the image. In doing so the soundtrack allows this illusion of subservience *to* the image in order to conceal its predominance *over* the image. The purpose of this reversal is to demonstrate that neither the soundtrack nor the imagetrack is in practice prioritized over the other: both are necessary in order to confirm the truth of the other.

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²See Altman's and the other essays in *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980). See also Elisabeth Weis and John Belton, ed., *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Michel Chion, *Le Son au Cinema* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinema/Editions de l'Etoile, 1985); Rick Altman, ed., *Sound Theory, Sound Practice* (London: Routledge, 1992). Studies of film theory are now embracing theories of film sound more wholeheartedly too: see, for example, the chapters on sound in Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

Work such as Altman's has sought to redress the theoretical balance in favor of the soundtrack, in recognition of the vital role it plays in proposing and confirming the reality of the film's diegetic world; that is, the fiction set up within the frame—the inferred world of which the characters are a part.³ For example, it is the synchronization of sound to image—best exemplified by lip-synchronization in onscreen dialogue—that convinces us of the reality of the film's fictional world. As Mary Ann Doane points out, however, such reevaluations of the soundtrack also incur the revelation of the soundtrack's potential to expose the diegesis as a false reality, thus in turn disclosing the material heterogeneity within film as a medium—that is, sound and image.⁴ The camera works to perpetuate the ideology that the sound issues from the image (by behaving as though it must always move to identify the source of a sound) in order to mask the film's material sound/image split (and, thus, the technologically and mechanically generated nature of the film). While sound- and imagetracks are—in orthodox terms—usually unified in film, clearly they can also be (and sometimes are) combined in more antagonistic and divergent ways that demonstrate the schism that persists between them. For example, while on the one hand the presentation of off-screen sound can be said to confirm the continuity of diegetic space by denying the limitations of the frame, on the other, such sounds always entail the risk of threatening a film's unity of discourse; mainstream cinema contains this risk by making reference to the existence of these sounds within the diegesis.⁵ The basis of this “tension of the unknown” inherent in sounds that lack the visual confirmation of their sources in the image derives from the physical differences between light and sound: as Altman points out, unlike light, sound can travel around corners.⁶ I want to suggest that this risk—of threatening a film's unity of discourse—is precisely the resource that the soundtrack offers to Derek Jarman in *The Garden* (1990).

³The terminology of the “diegesis” in relation to film was first proposed by Etienne Souriau in “La structure de l'univers filmique et le vocabulaire de la filmologie,” *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, 7–8 (1951): 231–40. Claudia Gorbman later introduced the term into film musicology. See, for example, Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London: BFI, 1987).

⁴Mary Ann Doane, “The Voice in Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space,” *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 35, 40.

⁵*Ibid.*, 41.

⁶Altman, “Moving Lips,” 74.

Despite a renewed interest in his paintings since the mid-1980s, Jarman continues to be best known as an openly gay British filmmaker who often made films that depicted gay love or reclaimed history for the homosexual community.⁷ In December 1986 he discovered that he was HIV positive. From that point on he became something of an ambassador for those who were HIV positive or had developed AIDS, speaking openly to the liberal media about his condition in a way that had never previously been undertaken by someone in a position of (cultural) power infected with the virus.

Much of *The Garden* was shot in the inhospitable environment of Dungeness beach—the largest area of estuarine shingle in Europe—under the shadow of a nuclear power station.⁸ After an introductory film-within-a-film sequence (which is based on the fall from grace in the garden of Eden), we see a shot of Jarman falling asleep at his desk, with the suggestion that the film that follows is a dream sequence. The central (though nonlinear) narrative is based loosely on the story of the Passion, in which a gay couple are substituted for the traditional Jesus figure on several occasions: in this way the suffering of Jesus is equated with that of homosexuals, with particular focus on their suffering since the AIDS crisis. There are also sections that deal briefly with Christ's early life, though in a contemporary setting: one with Madonna and child (discussed below) and another with a young boy and a man, which Michael O'Pray suggests might portray the young Jesus and Joseph.⁹ The film combines documentary footage shot on Super-8 over the previous three years, staged sequences shot on video and film, and also uses shot repetition, filters, and time-lapse photography.

Through an investigation of the film's sound-image relationships, a consideration of acousmatic sound and music, and the film's sung performances, I suggest that a gap is exposed between sound and image,

⁷As Michael O'Pray points out, however, it should also be noted that "Jarman's films have often been problematic for the gay press. His sadomasochistic rendering of homosexuality was seen as a narrow view of homosexual relations and he was never a gay filmmaker in the sense of being a balanced spokesman for gay issues." O'Pray, *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England* (London: BFI, 1996), 11.

⁸Dungeness is situated on the south Kent coast. Jarman made a home in a beachcomber cottage there (Prospect Cottage) in the late 1980s and created a garden that has become infamous. See Derek Jarman and Howard Sooley, *Derek Jarman's Garden* (New York: Overlook Press, 1996).

⁹O'Pray, *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England*, 178.

creating a space in which the soundtrack is able to speak its own voice, liberated from slavery to the image. In the analysis that follows, I suggest that *The Garden* presents a damning criticism—embodied in the form of the image and the camera—of the British tabloid press’s renewed vigor in their persecution of homosexuals since the AIDS crisis. In this film the soundtrack embodies redemption.

“The Garden”: Liberating the Soundtrack

Simon Fisher-Turner’s soundtrack for *The Garden* comprises both original and precomposed music, sound effects, and voice-over.¹⁰ There is little onscreen dialogue: what conversation there is is shown as mute. Lip-synchronization does occur elsewhere during the film, but only intermittently and in nonspoken vocalizations, such as laughing, screaming, and singing. Jarman’s rejection of onscreen dialogue results in the loss of the primary technique by which a film promotes an illusory unity of discourse and conceals the medium’s material heterogeneity. Early in the film we are presented with a scene that not only reveals the soundtrack’s potential to liberate itself from the tyranny of the image, but also allows the image to reassert this containment. The scene in question is the attack on Mary by masked photographers, which occurs about twelve minutes into the film. It features a small group of paparazzi-like photographers dressed in black and wearing (terrorist) balaclavas to cover their faces. The scene begins with the photographers shouting instructions for poses to Tilda Swinton, who plays Mary, with the baby Jesus. The photographers quickly become more aggressive, first toward each other, then toward their subject. Mary sets the child down and tries to walk away from them. The photographers try to obstruct her escape, and as she persists they begin to chase after her. At the end of the scene we see Mary successfully fight off the photographers as they attack her and brawl together on the beach. This chase and attack on Mary is intercut with short peaceful shots of the baby in close-up, playing with a plastic windmill in Jarman’s Dungeness garden. A sonic elision

¹⁰ Authorship of the soundtrack to *The Garden* belongs to both Derek Jarman and Simon Fisher-Turner. I mention this not to diminish Fisher-Turner’s responsibility as the predominant composer of the soundtrack, but to highlight the collaborative aspect of their work. See Rob Young, “The Soundtrack Syndrome,” *The Wire* 153 (November 1996): 26–30.

connects the child's gurgles with his mother's acoustically distorted screams.

During this sequence the soundtrack features birdsong, music, diegetic sound, and the manipulation of diegetic and real-world sounds that have no visible onscreen sources. Even before the images of the sequence appear onscreen, the clicking of camera shutters can be heard on the soundtrack. During the scene this (apparently) diegetic sound is manipulated by means of compression, distortion, and looping. The new sounds that result, though different from the original camera sounds, retain a strong enough similarity to them that they may be heard as generated by the same onscreen source. When the sounds of nonvisible sources—a helicopter, the firing of machine guns, and a noisy mechanical printer—are heard, however, the manipulated sounds of the cameras retrospectively take on a mediatory role. Despite the fact that these sounds have no apparent source within the fictional world of the film, and thus represent a threat to its unity (and subsequently, its reality), these manipulated sounds provide a “sonic bridge” between the unseen real-world sounds and the sound of the cameras (which are rooted in the image). In this way the image provides a possible source for the unseen sounds and attempts to contain the threat they pose.

The sounds of helicopters and machine guns clearly present codes associated with surveillance: chase, persecution, violence, terrorism, and the armed forces. Because these sounds are presented at the same time as images that show the photographers' aggression toward, and subsequent chasing and attacking of Mary, their meaning in this context is confirmed—they serve to associate these codes of persecution with the camera itself. The implication that these sounds are actually generated by the cameras makes their incorporation surreptitious. This sequence presents materially what retheorization of the soundtrack can mean for film: it suggests that the soundtrack and imagetrack need not coincide, and thus reveals the material heterogeneity of the medium. In this sequence, however, the danger to the singular “truth” of the image brought about by the liberation of the soundtrack is concealed by implying that the liberated sounds are actually sourced by the imagetrack after all.

The camera shutter sequence is not the only instance of the potential liberation of the soundtrack (and its subsequent containment by the image) in *The Garden*. In broad terms this liberation is effected in three different ways in the course of the film: first, through the presentation of real-world sounds without visible sources, as demonstrated by the camera shutter

sequence; second, through the use of certain kinds of electroacoustic acousmatic music on the soundtrack; and third, through out-of-sync singing directly to the camera. The first and second of these routes to soundtrack liberation are closely linked, since sounds with unseen sources can also be defined as acousmatic. The next section of this essay is concerned with the acousmatic listening situation and explores how it represents a liberatory potential for the soundtrack.

Acousmatic Listening

The term *acousmatic* dates back to ancient Greece. During his lectures, Pythagoras concealed himself from his students by means of a curtain. He did this in order to assist his students in focusing their attention on his words rather than other less important sensory information, such as the necessary mediation of the body in speech. In a broader sense the term defines any listening situation in which the sources of the sounds are withheld or concealed from the sight of the auditor. The term was introduced into music theory in the 1960s by composer and theorist Pierre Schaeffer and his colleagues. Due to the profusion of radios, tape recordings, vinyl records, and so on, the acousmatic listening situation was, by then, ubiquitous.

While Schaeffer himself realized that the Pythagorean curtain would not be enough to discourage the instinctive curiosity that auditors have about a sound's source and/or cause,¹¹ he argued that the acousmatic listening situation made favorable the potential for "reduced listening" (*l'écoute réduite*). This involved discarding any knowledge of a sound's source and any symbolic meanings such sounds may have and listening to the sound as an object in itself (*l'objet sonore*). Schaeffer's goal was to create a new musical language from sound, a task which resulted in the development of *musique concrète*—music built from altered and reorganized natural (real-world) sounds. Schaeffer's work was radically different from the German school of electroacoustic and electronic music which was based in studios at Cologne. There his contemporaries, such as Karlheinz Stockhausen, were interested primarily in composing music from sounds that they had created *ab initio*. By contrast, Schaeffer saw advances in audio technology and the potential for the acousmatic listening situation that they enabled as a means for developing subjects' listening skills and, thus, their awareness of the

¹¹Pierre Schaeffer, *Traité des Objets Musicaux*, rev. ed. (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 93.

music in all sound. John Dack suggests that it was probably as a result of his dealings with sound and sound effects as a radiophonic artist, rather than through music *per se*, that Schaeffer came to argue that it was possible for real-world sounds to transcend their causal origins and symbolic meanings and be listened to as “sounding objects” (*les objets sonores*).¹²

Schaeffer began to investigate the relationship between the listening subject and the object of its perception under the acousmatic listening situation offered by radio and sound recording. He found that auditors were not particularly unsettled by listening to traditional music on the radio or a recording if they were familiar with the musical instruments of that culture.¹³ Sounds used in radiophonic art heard under the same acousmatic conditions were less easily recognized due to the manipulation to which they were subject: mixing, amplification, juxtaposition, and filtering, for example. From listening to these recorded and transformed real-world sounds in the studio, and by the isolating effects of recording very short fragments of sound and listening to them repeatedly, Schaeffer suggested that they could function beyond mere sound *effects*. He proposed that a wholly different experience could be created for the listener than that elicited by traditional musical instruments (with their easily recognizable sources) in terms of the relationship between a subject and a sound. In suppressing the support that vision gives to the identification of sound’s sources, the acousmatic listening situation has the potential to cause the listener to misrecognize such sources. It also makes listening to sounds as sounding objects in their own right (that is, disregarding their sources and symbolic meanings) easier.

Advances in sound recording technology have made possible the ability to isolate very short sequences or segments of sound by recording them and looping them together—either by means of a physical loop of tape, or, now, digitally—thus facilitating repeated listening. Repeated listening to a sounding object fixed by recording reveals that listening is not static and fixed but dynamic: repeated listening allows the focus of a listener’s attention to be drawn to different aspects of a sounding object at different times. This potential, together with the juxtapositions made possible by

¹²John Dack, “Pierre Schaeffer and the Significance of Radiophonic Art,” *Contemporary Music Review* 10, no. 2 (1994): 3–12.

¹³Though this is less true of some twentieth-century (and twenty-first-century) music that involves extended techniques of playing, for example. Here, listeners’ expectations of what an instrument can do—the range of sounds by which it is recognized—are manipulated, often making recognition of the sound’s source difficult.

radiophonic art, means that even quite prosaic sounds can be, in a sense, “renewed,” revealing new, multiple meanings.

The acousmatic listening situation covers a potentially huge range of sounds: from the presentation of real-world sounds, the sources of which are concealed from sight (as in the camera shutter sequence), to that of wholly synthesized sounds. In terms of the soundtrack to *The Garden*, I shall use the term *acousmatic music* to define “music that is recorded and then diffused without combination with live electronics or live performers; it exists only on tape (whether analog or digital) or as a fixed set of instructions to a computer.”¹⁴ This definition also covers a potentially large range of electroacoustic music, from those works that present a montage of minimally transformed real-world sounds to those that present only wholly synthesized sounds. The soundtrack to *The Garden* uses both transformed-but-recognizable real-world sounds (for example, fingers around the rims of wine glasses, the slowed down sounds of rocks hitting concrete, flares, manipulated camera shutter sounds) and sounds that have been generated wholly by synthesis (such as the pulsating harmonic sound of the film’s opening credit sequence, and the sound that succeeds it, which is focused on a single pitch). At times both types are combined with sounds produced by traditional musical instruments.

When transformed-but-recognizable real-world sounds are presented in *The Garden*, the original sources of the sounds are usually seen onscreen simultaneously, thus assisting spectator-auditors with source recognition. With sounds that are less recognizably real-world derived, the image works to propose feasible source objects in an attempt to conceal their acousmatic character. This is particularly true of their first presentation in the soundtrack. For example, the second sustained acousmatic sound used in the film—which I shall refer to as sound B—is presented in sync with a close-up of a six-spot lighting rig, the implication being that the sound issues from the rig. Seconds later, a repetitive rhythmic pulsing that could be the sound of a heartbeat is heard. Its very first rhythms are heard in sync with the impact of droplets of water dripping onto a phallic rock located within the image. The

¹⁴Luke Windsor, “A Perceptual Approach to the Description and Analysis of Acousmatic Music,” (Ph.D. thesis, City University, UK, 1995), 5. See also Luke Windsor, “Through and Around the Acousmatic: The Interpretation of Electroacoustic Sounds,” in *Music, Electronic Media, and Culture*, ed. Simon Emmerson (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), 9–35, for a summary of the ideas presented in Windsor, 1995.

liberatory potential of the soundtrack is contained by the image in a manner similar to the way in which the (unseen) real-world sounds presented during the camera shutter sequence are contained. After their first appearance on the soundtrack, however, examples of acousmatic sound and music often recur during the film without visual reference to plausible sources.

The recognition and differentiation of sounds is made more difficult again by the close sonic relationship of several of the sustained acousmatic sounds, which are often heard layered on top of one another. For example, just under six minutes into the film we are presented with an image of a chair burning on a bonfire on Dungeness beach in front of the power station. The soundtrack at this point comprises the diegetic sound of the burning chair, sound B (heard earlier in connection with the lighting rig), and a new electroacoustic sound: sound C. This last sound is perhaps best described in terms of an oscillatory motion: it is repetitive—a sound that fades in, is sustained, and fades out again at regular intervals. It has a high proportion of broad band noise within it and so also bears a strong resemblance to the sound of the flares (signal lights) and of the sea, both of which are frequently seen and heard during the film. About fifteen seconds after the first presentation of this sound we see the image of a radar tracking device for the first time. Its motion matches that described by sound C closely enough to imply that the sound's source has now been located by the camera. With the visual presentation of the tracking device, however, a louder, pitched sound is superimposed on top of the sound C. This sound—D—also matches the oscillatory motion of the tracking device, but is only heard when the tracking device is seen onscreen. The image moves between shots of a boy playing near a washing line and the radar tracking device, combining diegetic sound (the boy hitting the washing with some bracken from the beach) with sound B and the pitched sound associated with the tracking device (D). The diegetic sound and sound D are faded out when a shot of a table in Jarman's garden is seen, followed by a shot of another table (that of the Last Supper) around which women in black are seated, moving their fingers around the rims of wine glasses. The sound created by this action (which is first heard in sync with the appearance of its apparent source) bears a strong resemblance to both sound B and sound D, but is also related to sound C by virtue of its oscillatory motion. The sound of waves lapping against the shore is also

heard, while the image includes the superimposition of a boat sailing on the sea in the background, behind the table.¹⁵

While Schaeffer's concept of reduced listening (mentioned above) may be a useful tool in terms of compositional technique and the development of new musical languages, it does not provide an accurate account of listeners' actual experience of acousmatic sound and music. Drawing on psychoacoustics and ecological psychology, several more contemporary theorists of listening argue that acousmatic sound and music is not only potentially threatening to the image because it denies sound-image unity, but also because listeners are predisposed to search out and identify the sources of sounds presented to them, both in terms of general perception and musical listening, and are thus unable to separate a sound from its source. Christianne Ten Hoopen states that "[w]e are naturally inclined (like animals) to relate sounds we perceive to what might have caused them, especially with sounds unfamiliar to us or when sounds occur in unexpected circumstances."¹⁶ Similarly, Trevor Wishart argues that "studies of behavior and aural physiology would suggest that our mental apparatus is predisposed to allocate sounds to their sources."¹⁷ On the bonding of sources with sounds, Denis Smalley states that we have a "natural tendency to relate sounds to supposed sources and causes, and relate sounds to each other because they appear to have shared or associated origins."¹⁸ What happens when this natural inclination is frustrated? Such matters are of central importance with acousmatic music. Wholly synthesized, or maximally transformed real-world sounds that display behaviors not reminiscent of any real-world sounds may confound a listener's natural predisposition to locate and identify these sounds' sources.

Luke Windsor proposes an explanation for this "natural tendency" to identify sounds' sources and suggests that a descriptive theory of acousmatic music that takes into account a listener's perceptual response to everyday sounds offers a more accurate representation of a subject's understanding of

¹⁵This backdrop was shot on video and matted in. See O'Pray, *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England*, 179.

¹⁶Christianne Ten Hoopen, "Issues in Timbre and Perception," *Contemporary Music Review* 10, no. 2 (1994): 61.

¹⁷Trevor Wishart, *On Sonic Art* (York: Imagineering Press, 1985), 70.

¹⁸Denis Smalley, "Defining Timbre—Redefining Timbre," *Contemporary Music Review* 10, no. 2 (1994): 37.

this music.¹⁹ Windsor argues that an ecological approach to perception, which assumes a direct and dynamic relationship between a subject and its environment, is appropriate to the task.²⁰ He extends and reinterprets the ecological position to include socially and culturally defined phenomena as environmental materials directly perceivable by an organism.

Ecological psychology proposes that perception is unmediated by mental representations of the external world. It describes a direct relationship between the receiver and her/his environment, in which the environment is structured and organisms are directly sensitive to this structure. Organisms' perceptual systems evolve to pick up information that will increase their chances of survival. The dynamic relationship between the organism and its environment "is seen to provide the grounds for the direct perception of meaning."²¹ Gibson defines this direct perception of meaning as "affordance." That is, certain objects and events "afford" certain possibilities for action. Affordances differ according to the organism and are also dynamic in terms of individual perceptual development. Thus, affordance describes the "relationship between a particular environmental structure and a particular organism's needs and capacities."²²

Windsor argues that in acousmatic music, events, rather than sounds, should be considered the primary units of auditory perception. Thus, in describing musical structure, pertinence would be defined by the events perceived in the acoustic structure of the music rather than by more abstract musical categories such as rhythm.²³ Windsor and the other authors cited above dispute the possibility of a mode of listening in which the auditor is wholly freed from her/his natural predisposition to search out and identify sounds in terms of the events (and thus also sources) that cause them. The pull of this hard-wired inclination is too strong to ignore completely. Thus, if

¹⁹Windsor, "A Perceptual Approach to the Description and Analysis of Acousmatic Music."

²⁰For a Gibsonian view of ecological approaches to perception, see James J. Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (London: Unwin Bros., 1966), and *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1979).

²¹Windsor, "A Perceptual Approach to the Description and Analysis of Acousmatic Music," 58.

²²*Ibid.* Ecological psychologists are divided, however, over the use of the term "affordance." See the special issue of *Ecological Psychology* 12, no. 1 (2000): 1–107, entitled "How Are Affordances Related to Events? An Exchange of Views."

²³Windsor also warns against neglecting musical context, however.

an auditor is unable to identify the event that caused a particular sound, the implication is that they will feel some degree of discomfort.

Smalley proposes that without the presence of “gesture” in music (and thus, at some level, the mediation of the human body), listeners are alienated.²⁴ The development of electroacoustic acousmatic music has, for the first time in history, resulted in a music in which the obligation of bodily mediation is undone. Before this situation arose, the presence of the human body, whether as sounding body in itself or mediating agency, was mandatory in the realization of all instrumental and vocal music. Smalley argues that behind the causality of human gesture inherent in traditional musical performance lies first a more general sense of physical gesture and “its proprioceptive tensions,” and second, “a deeper, psychological experience of gesture.”²⁵ In order to describe the different strengths of the relationship between acts of human gesture and sounds in music (acousmatic or traditional) Smalley creates the concept of gestural surrogacy.

First order surrogacy describes instrumental gestures that “stand-in-for” nonmusical, physical gestures. For example, the bowing of a stringed instrument implies the necessity of a physical gesture in order to produce the sound. The possibility of *second order surrogacy* is a result of the development of electroacoustic music techniques, in which traces of human gesture are maintained by sound alone. At the far end of the spectrum lies *remote order surrogacy*, in which links between sources/causes and sounds have been severed, as in the case of maximally transformed real-world sounds and wholly synthesized sounds in acousmatic music: access to the more broadly defined tensile levels are not mediated by (and cannot be located in) the timbre of the sound. Here, gestures are maintained only in terms of their translation into the energy/motion field, which may then be interpreted in terms of psychological states or gestures, though neither a specific gesture type nor source can be identified. When all reference to gesture has been dissipated—whether that be actual bodily gesture, a more general sense of physical gesture, or psychological gesture—there is nothing for the listener to grasp: “[listeners] may feel as if ‘observing’ invisible

²⁴Smalley, “Defining Timbre—Redefining Timbre.”

²⁵Ibid, 39.

phenomena displayed on a screen or in a space.”²⁶ Thus, the presence of the human trace in music through history still weighs heavily on musical listening.

Traditional nondiegetic film music (“background music”) that uses recognizable musical instruments does not threaten the reality of the diegesis in the way that electroacoustic acousmatic music does because, on the one hand, its presence is conventional, and on the other, listeners recognize the mediation of the human body in its production. In the case of the transformed real-world sounds and wholly synthesized sounds in the soundtrack to *The Garden*, spectator-auditors tend to accept the false yet “feasible” real-world sources proposed by the image. As a result, they are protected from the potential danger posed by the presence of acousmatic music and sound.

I suggested above that the presentation of sounds while concealing or withholding their sources has the potential to destabilize the dogma of the image in film theory’s earlier model of the sound-image relationship in the classical Hollywood film. Part of this relationship involves convincing the audience of the “reality” of the filmic diegesis. If sound does not confirm the veridicality of the image by being visibly synchronous with it, it holds the potential to undermine the image as the most truthful source of knowledge. Although, to a certain extent, all film sound and music falls into the category of the acousmatic—not only is it distributed by loudspeakers situated behind the screen and at various points around the auditorium, much of it is also recorded separately from the image, with the soundtrack only synchronized to the image at a fairly late stage in post-production in many cases—clearly, film sound usually denies its acousmatic character: to do otherwise would be to admit the separately manufactured nature of the sound-image complex in film and thus deny the “reality” of the diegetic world, revealing its mechanical, technological origin.

In *The Garden* the image works to present feasible real-world source objects for the electroacoustic acousmatic music, and also offers a number of synchronized sound sequences in order to conceal the separately manufactured character of the soundtrack. Cracks are left to gape unfilled, however: there is a profusion of acousmatic music that is only accompanied

²⁶Denis Smalley, “The Listening Imagination: Listening in the Electroacoustic Era,” in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, ed. J. Paynter, T. Howell, R. Orton, and P. Seymour (London: Routledge, 1992), 525.

by the appearance of a feasible real-world source at its first presentation on the soundtrack; there is a lack of onscreen dialogue; and there are a number of out-of-sync sung performances. The remainder of this essay addresses the film's several (apparently) live sung performances and explains how Jarman's referencing of Stanley Donen's 1956 film musical *Funny Face* assists in presenting a reappraisal of the camera and, consequently, the image.

Singing in "The Garden"

There are three occasions when characters are seen to sing whole songs or song verses within the screen's frame. Two of these sung performances—"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and the excerpt from "La donna e mobile" (from Verdi's opera *Rigoletto*)—continue the action of the central narrative, which is, as mentioned above, concerned broadly with the story of the Passion.²⁷ They are sung *a cappella* by the policemen and are directed to the gay couple (who share the role of Jesus with a more traditional, bearded, robe-wearing performer). The policemen do not actively engage or address the camera. The spectator-auditor is constituted as one who overhears the performance.

The other sung performance in the film—"Think Pink" by Roger Edens—occupies a more ambiguous position in relation to the central narrative.²⁸ It disrupts rather than furthers the film's narrative exposition. The song is sung by Jessica Martin, who does not appear in any other role during the film. The gay couple appears in the frame with her for a few seconds, wearing pink suits and cradling a baby, but the song is sung *on behalf of* or *with* the couple, rather than *to* them. It is addressed instead—with Jessica Martin's look—to the camera and spectator-auditor, and is accompanied by a (nondiegetic) chamber orchestra and chorus, who perform an arrangement of the song from *Funny Face* that is similar to the original.

It is useful to consider these three performances as falling into the following two groups: performance as spectacle and performance as denial, with the former exemplified by "Think Pink" and the latter by the policemen's singing. In performance as denial a negative aspect of

²⁷These performances take place at approximately forty-six and fifty-seven minutes into the film, respectively.

²⁸This performance occurs approximately twenty-eight minutes into the film.

performance is foregrounded, in particular its use as a mechanism for shutting out an unwanted relationship with the external world, thus creating an invisible barrier around the performer. Performance in this context is marked by the performer's unwillingness and consequent inability to hear anything but her- or himself. It is often used to indicate fear and/or obstinacy and impertinence on the part of the protagonist. Comparable examples can be found in both opera and film; for instance, Bizet's *Carmen* (1874) and Tom Shadyac's *Liar, Liar* (1997). When Captain Zuninga attempts to question Carmen about the fight at the factory, not only does she not answer his questions, she refuses to acknowledge that she has heard them by starting to sing a song instead: "Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la." When, in *Liar, Liar*, Jim Carrey's lawyer character realizes he is unable to tell lies anymore, he places his hands over his ears and begins to sing loudly to facilitate an escape from his offices without destroying his career. Similarly, the policemen's singing in *The Garden* is a defense mechanism—protecting them from any response the couple might make—but also an attempt to threaten and humiliate through the use of their voices and music as weapons. Furthermore, on both occasions when the policemen sing, the gay couple is unable to respond. On the first occasion—"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"—they are asleep; on the second—"La donna e mobile"—they have been bound and gagged, then tarred and feathered. It is as though the policemen need to make doubly sure that they can protect themselves from the couple's reply. The couple's fate is thus decided by the media's vehement desire to prevent them from speaking: to make them die in silence.²⁹

"Think Pink": Performance as Spectacle

During the sequence in Stanley Donen's *Funny Face* in which "Think Pink" originally features, Miss Prescott (Kay Thompson) is complaining about the as yet unissued next edition of *Quality Magazine*, which "doesn't speak." As she does so—"d for dreary, d for dull and for depressing, dismal and deadly"—she places in her mouth a cigarette, which is subsequently lit by one of her fussing editorial assistants who strikes the match on a piece of pink card. Suddenly Miss Prescott has found the theme that the issue lacks:

²⁹My phrasing is a reference to the refrain from Michael Gough's final voice-over in *The Garden*: "They die so silently...you die so silently...we die so silently...I die so silently."

“Pink!” (Cue song). The song’s lyrics take the form of an editorial—“Letty, take an editorial!”—which is itself a call to women everywhere to ditch every other available color in favor of pink. Pink suits every occasion, activity, time of day, and social class. Miss Prescott even suggests that readers should “try pink shampoo” and “pink toothpaste too.” The first segment of the song is sung by Kay Thompson, who sings to the camera, addressing the internal audience formed by her entourage. The final section (a return to the music of the first) is sung and danced to the camera by Kay Thompson and her entourage (augmented by a number of painters and decorators). The middle segment of the song is sung by a chorus of unseen female singers (who appear, in retrospect, to be Miss Prescott’s editorial assistants). It is accompanied by a sequence of shots of photo-shoot material that have been edited together into a collection, and which will provide the photographs for the “pink” feature. The sequence uses images that have been generated by state-of-the-art trick-shot film-making.³⁰

In *The Garden*’s version of “Think Pink” the apparent lip-synchronization is clearly and deliberately out of sync at certain points, perhaps indicating nostalgia for the earlier, more innocent time of the Hollywood musical. To a certain extent this performance acknowledges the artifice of its construction, both in terms of the poor lip-synchronization and the address of Jessica Martin’s performance directly into the camera. As Jane Feuer has pointed out, the direct address to the camera is a means used by both the film musical and the avant-garde to achieve radically different ends: in the latter it is a technique of modernist alienation, in the former it encourages audience identification.³¹ Feuer argues that it is the tradition of its particular contextualization that decides the resulting effect. Direct address in the film musical encourages identification due to the genre’s evolution from earlier models of live entertainment such as the music hall, and the subsequent incorporation of its forerunner’s live audience into the frame (though over time the presence of this internal audience onscreen became redundant due to its conventionalization). As a modernist technique of the avant-garde, the direct address works against identification. It generates alienation and distance instead through the audience’s recognition

³⁰This segment of the song (and the first part of the final section) is absent in Jarman’s version; a short transition passage is added in its stead.

³¹Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

of both the presence of the apparatus, and of the film as product created with an audience in mind.

It is perhaps a result of Jarman's partial, yet uneasy alignment with both of these traditions that "Think Pink" is both not without comfort, yet, equally, not wholly encouraging of identification. The spectator-auditor is constituted as the live audience of both a spontaneous musical performance and a technologically generated, materially heterogeneous filmic discourse. It is in this exposed gap between sound and image, manifested at the material level in the out-of-sync singing to the camera, that a space is created for the soundtrack to speak with its own voice.

The act of recontextualizing "Think Pink" by performing it in *The Garden* appropriates the song as an anthem for gay liberation: footage from marches and demonstrations for this cause are projected onto the blue-screen behind Jessica Martin. There is subtle and camp humor, resulting primarily from the irony created by transplanting the song wholesale from the context of a 1950s fashion magazine's call to action to that of a Jarman film concerned with issues that include the persecution of homosexuals. The line "Who cares if the new look has no bust" is a case in point, since in this context "thinking pink" distinctly implies a "lack" in that department! More interesting, however, in terms of this recontextualization, is Jarman's reappraisal of the camera as representative of the media.

Donen's film is set in the world of fashion photography. Several of its musical numbers—including "Funny Face" and "Bonjour Paris"—allude to this world in their use of state-of-the-art camera trickery; the film won an Oscar for its photography. *Funny Face* makes reference to its photographic heritage and fetishizes the camera. Jarman also references this heritage in *The Garden*, not by using state-of-the-art technology, but rather through the use of the relatively low-fi Super-8 camera and its characteristic facilities, such as mobility. This camera, launched by Kodak in 1965 and widely available, was marketed as a home-movie camera. It was smaller, cheaper, and easier to use than its competitors, and included features such as an automatic light meter. Jarman exploited such ease-of-use features for other, more creative purposes, producing blurred, grainy, dream-like images. Furthermore, by purporting to use a soundtrack recorded at the same time as these images, Jarman placed the camera *itself* onto the soundtrack in *The Garden*—the sounds of both stills cameras and the Super-8 are featured prominently. So, *The Garden* also references its photographic heritage, but does so without idolizing the camera. Whereas in *Funny Face*, Dick Avery's

(Fred Astaire's) camera was necessary to transform Jo Stockton (Audrey Hepburn) from an "ugly duckling" into an object of desire—to liberate her latent beauty—in *The Garden* cameras become the tools of aggression and invasion. This transformation is also exemplified by Fisher-Turner's foregrounding of these sounds in the mix and the manipulation of their diegetic sounds.

This reappraisal of the camera portrays the renewed vigor of tabloid journalism's persecution of homosexuality since the AIDS crisis and also comments upon the photographic and cinematic representation of homosexuals and people with AIDS: it suggests that the British media are unable to present a positive picture—in both senses of both terms—of the person with AIDS that is not invasive and aggressive. As Paul Julian Smith has said: "How can film represent an invisible virus whose transmission cannot be seen and whose carriers have been subject to hostile surveillance and revelation?"³² By referencing *Funny Face* Jarman is able to demonstrate how the role of the camera had changed from that of a liberating force to a tool of surveillance, disclosure, and persecution. In light of this reassessment, the camera could not then be used to present the testimony of those who are HIV positive.

Coda: "Blue"

Blue (1993), the last film that Jarman completed before his death, grew out of a fascination with the monochromatic work of painter Yves Klein, in particular, his *Symphonie Monotone*.³³ The film's narrative traces the onset of Jarman's blindness. The image presented by the film remains the same throughout: a blue screen created by film processing techniques. *Blue* confirms the acousmatic character of film sound throughout by filling the screen with the color blue, preventing any attempt to propose that the source of the film's soundtrack lies within the image.³⁴ In this way, *Blue* offers the total liberation of the soundtrack, presented as a potential in *The Garden*. Similarly, in John Greyson's AIDS film-musical *Zero Patience* (1993)—

³²Paul Julian Smith, "Blue and the Outer Limits," *Sight and Sound* 3, no. 7 (October 1993): 18.

³³See O'Pray, *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England*, 201.

³⁴See Patrizia Lombardo, "Cruellement bleu," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 131–33, for an interesting response to the experience of this film.

made in the same year as *Blue*—an attempt is made to recuperate the voice of the person with AIDS, as well as that of the disease itself, in the form of (soprano) Miss HIV.³⁵

In *The Garden*, the soundtrack bears witness to the media's aggression toward and persecution of those with AIDS, linking the camera directly to codes of persecution. Attempts are made to liberate the soundtrack from the image through the use of acousmatic electroacoustic music and sound, but the threat of these efforts is contained and denied by the image, through, for example, the proposal of feasible real-world sources on the first appearance of each new sound. Jarman also proposes that the Establishment—in the form of the church, law enforcement agencies, and so on—is unable to hear the voices either of people with AIDS or of homosexuals because it is itself making too much noise in self-defense. Nevertheless, *The Garden* is not without hope, for it highlights the potential of the soundtrack as a liberating force, able to undermine the dogma of the camera, and thus the image.

In its possible liberation from the image, the soundtrack of *The Garden* presents the potential for the reparation of this community's voice—a potential that is more fully offered by *Blue*. Furthermore, this liberation from the image happens not only in the recontextualization of "Think Pink," but also in a number of other sequences in the film. For instance, in one musical interlude (a caricature that draws on the aesthetic of television commercials) a character addresses the camera directly and introduces what he calls "credit card day," a day in celebration of consumerism.³⁶ The music of this sequence is ironic: it is emphatically tonal and orchestrated in a somewhat saccharine manner with a generous helping of harp glissandi. This sequence both identifies the spectator-auditor as part of a live audience of a spontaneous performance and simultaneously alienates him/her from the diegetic world by revealing the filmmaking apparatus. Furthermore, the sound is out of sync with the image, which results in the rupture of sound-image unity. Another example of this occurs in the performance of a flamenco dance, throughout which the sound is slightly out of sync with the image, and in which the performer addresses the camera directly.³⁷

³⁵See Monica Pearl, "Zero Patience: AIDS, Music and Reincarnation Films," in *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond*, ed. B. Marshall and R. Stilwell (Exeter: Intellect Books, 2000), 141–46.

³⁶This sequence occurs approximately twenty minutes into the film.

³⁷This sequence occurs approximately thirty-two minutes into the film.

In *The Garden*, Jarman and Fisher-Turner demonstrate that the sound- and imageracks of a film need not be unified. Liberated from the image, the soundtrack is able to speak for a minority community that has suffered much through the hostile surveillance and revelations of the tabloid media.

Filmography

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